

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for modeling a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user, the method comprising:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of the characters;

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text for each of the plurality of computer-based characters, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters;

storing a plurality of behavior patterns,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines a conversation with between the user and the character,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, and
wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to user between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags; and

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the

currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices;

receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;

updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship

variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on

interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;

selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated
relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed; and

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the
online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second
behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the
character text of the currently selected character.

~~modeling the two-way conversation by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the~~
~~frames of the selected behavior pattern with the situation text of the selected situation and the~~
~~character text of the selected character.~~

Claims 2-3 (Cancelled).

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 13, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

selecting a current one of the frames of the behavior pattern

presenting the text-based dialogue from the character to the user; and

presenting the response dialogue from a plurality of the frames to the user for selection as a plurality of choices.

Claim 5 (Cancelled).

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 15, wherein the frames of the behavior pattern comprises a set of fixed pointers to other frames within the behavior pattern, and generating a two-way conversation comprises traversing the pointers of the linked frames based on the selection received from the user at each of the frames.

Claim 7 (Cancelled).

Claim 8 (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising
storing character-specific media of the computer-based character; and
displaying character-specific media with the dialogue generated for each frame of the modeled conversation.

Claim 9 (Original): The method of claim 8, wherein the character-specific media comprises a set of photographs associated with the computer-based character.

Claim 10 (Cancelled).

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A computer-readable medium comprising instruction to cause a computer to model a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user by:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of the characters;

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text for each of the plurality of computer-based characters, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters;

storing a plurality of behavior patterns,

wherein each of the behavior patterns that defines a conversation with between the user and the character,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to user between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags; and

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices; receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;

updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;

selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed; and

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the character text of the currently selected character.

~~modeling the two-way conversation by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the selected behavior pattern with the situation text of the selected situation and the character text of the selected character.~~

Claims 12 (Cancelled).

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): A system comprising:

a database to store:

(a) situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of the characters,

(b) character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text, for each of the plurality of computer-based characters, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters, and

(c) a plurality of behavior patterns, wherein each of the behavior patterns that defines a conversation with between the user and the character, wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to the user between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags;

a computer coupled to the database; and

a software engine executing on the computer, wherein the software engine models a two-way conversation by:

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices; receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;

updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;
selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed; and
presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the character text of the currently selected character.

~~between a user and a character by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames with the situation text and the character text in accordance with the media tags defined within the frames.~~

Claim 14 (Original): The system of claim 13, further comprising a client device, wherein the computer communicates the modeled conversation to the client device via a computer network for presentment to the user.

Claims 15-16 (Cancelled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The system of claim 13~~16~~, wherein the software engine selects a current one of the frames of the behavior pattern, presents the text-based dialogue from the character to the user, and presents the response dialogue from a plurality of the frames to the user for selection as a plurality of choices.

Claim 18 (Cancelled).

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): The system of claim 13~~18~~ wherein the database stores each of the frames of the behavior pattern to include a set of fixed pointers to other frames within the behavior pattern, and the software engine generates the two-way conversation by traversing the pointers of the linked frames based on the selection received from the user at each of the frames.

Claim 20 (Cancelled).